Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Richard Marles, and Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong Before the Australia-U.S. Ministerial Consultations

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Marco Rubio, Secretary of State

Washington, D.C.

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Remarks

December 8, 2025

SECRETARY RUBIO: Thank you. Thank you for covering us here today. I want to welcome our colleagues from Australia in this ministerial meeting. It's the first one in – that I've done as – in my time here in the last year. Obviously the same is true for Secretary Hegseth, and I want to welcome both the foreign minister and the deputy prime minister for defense for both joining us

here today.

This is an incredibly strong alliance. In fact, as we were discussing a few moments ago, it is our only ally that has fought with us in every war over the last – certainly over the last four or five decades, and we're very grateful to them for that. And this is a very strong partnership. It's a strong alliance, and what we want to do is continue to build on it.

We think we have a lot of momentum behind this alliance, coming off the visit with the prime minister here in October, which we also had a chance to participate in, and then follow-up events to it. And we felt very strongly after that that we have real momentum. We wanted to do this here before the end of the year to continue to build on that alliance and to continue to build on that momentum that came from that meeting and to work together on our shared priorities. And we have so many. We truly have no better friend.

In addition to that strong alliance, we're also deeply committed to the Quad, the concept of in conjunction with Japan and India the building out of this Quad, which is something you'll see. In fact, it was my first meeting as Secretary of State. I had been confirmed, sworn-in downstairs, and came right up on that elevator and into this room. And it was in this very room that I did my first event as Secretary of State with the Quad, and we look forward to – I think we've had at least three meetings this year, if I'm – I recall correctly, and we'll continue to build on that in the year to come. We look to do more of those.

And so we have a lot of things we've worked together on, at the direction of the President. AUKUS is full steam ahead, as he said. And I know the Department of War – though Secretary Hegseth will discuss that further – has conducted a review, which – it's a review about how we can expand this relationship, about how to build on it, so that it can be about many things.

And I know we've also signed a landmark critical mineral framework agreement. This is something we share in common, not just with Australia, but with many of our allies around the world – the desire to diversify supply chains, and the belief that in order for us to be able to do anything, whether it's defend our countries, defend our allies, or defend each other, but also to build our economies and to prosper as economies, we have to have critical mineral supplies and supply chains that are reliable and that are diverse and not overly invested in one place where they could be used as leverage against us or our partners or the world. And so this is something that you'll find the U.S. and Australia working very closely on, and it's at the cornerstone of everything we plan to do together in the months and years to come.

So I want to welcome you to Washington. Thank you for joining us and doing it – agreeing to doing it here at the end of this year. I know it's – you have many other obligations and places you're going to be traveling quite extensively in the days to come as well, so we're very grateful that you were willing to come here and join us. And we look forward to reciprocating in the new year by visiting you in Australia, as I look forward to – and it's one of my – I actually have never been, and I need to go. And it's a very efficient trip, because I can say I went to a country and a continent all at once – (laughter) – and so very rarely can you say that. So thank you for joining us here today. We're grateful and honored by your presence.

FOREIGN MINISTER WONG: Thank you very much, Secretary Rubio. And I thank you and Secretary Hegseth for hosting us in this extraordinary room, as you said, where we've had our first Quad meeting after you were sworn in. We're very – really, Rich and I are so happy to be here, so honored to participate in another AUSMIN meeting, and to build on the very successful meeting between the president and the prime minister, and including the historic critical minerals deal that they delivered.

AUSMIN was established – that is the meeting, this meeting was established – under President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Bob Hawke. And in 1985 President Reagan spoke of our common defense of freedom from the First and Second World Wars and he – and said, "All this has nurtured the bonds of friendship between our two peoples. Today the United States and Australia, as much as ever, rely on each other."

That remains true today. And as Secretary Rubio has said, Australian soldiers have fought beside American troops in every major battle since World War I. And we continue to rely on each other, not just our servicemen and women, whom we thank for their service, but all our people. And that's because the work we do together is indispensable to a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific. And this is something Secretary Rubio has spoken so eloquently about.

The United States is our principal ally and our principal strategic partner, and together we navigate volatility. We invest in each other. We invest in the region's security, and we boost each other's prosperity, whether that's through investment in critical minerals, critical technology, Australian superannuation or of course, AUKUS. Australia's approach to the alliance has always been to ensure – work to ensure it delivers concrete benefits for our security and prosperity and for that of the United States. And AUKUS is central to that – a win for Australia, a win for the U.S., and a win for the United Kingdom.

And we welcome President Trump's statement. We are full steam ahead. We are full steam ahead. So we look forward very much to these consultations today, very happy to be here in Washington. We'd also, Secretary Rubio, be very honored to welcome you to Australia, when you're next – when you're able to come. So thank you, again, for hosting us. We look forward to the discussions.

SECRETARY RUBIO: All right.

SECRETARY HEGSETH: Secretary Rubio, thank you for hosting us. Deputy Prime Minister Marles, we've seen each other often, and we will continue to. And Foreign Minister Wong, thank you for being here.

It was mentioned this is the 40th of AUSMIN – 1985. And it's not lost on any of us the depth of the friendship our two countries have had and our militaries have had for quite some time. And it was Ronald Reagan who, just like the Trump Administration, put a practical application to that partnership 40 years ago by ensuring that our leaders are meeting together regularly to stay on track in rowing in the same direction. Because we share the same values, the same neighborhood – we're both Pacific nations – and our leaderships coming together on a regular basis is a reflection of that.

So on the defense side, we're working on force posture; we're working on defense industrial cooperation. First on force posture initiatives, we're upgrading the infrastructure on airbases in Queensland and the Northern Territory. That allows for additional U.S. bomber rotations. We're upgrading logistics and infrastructure in Darwin so more U.S. Marines can do rotational deployments and pre-positioning MV-22 Ospreys. This establishes new and resilient logistics networks across Australia.

We're deepening our cooperation on the defense industrial base – cooperation on guided weapons production and lethal capabilities, two-year roadmaps on Australia's guided weapons and explosive ordinance enterprise, groundbreaking cooperative actions on things like GMLRS – Guided Missile Launch Rocket Systems – and precision strike missiles. And we're working towards coproduction and co-sustainment of hypersonic attack cruise missiles – co-sustainment air-to-air missiles cooperative programs across the board, including Mark 54 torpedoes.

We're also building on the historic framework and critical minerals cooperation that's been mentioned already by President Trump and Prime Minister Albanese signed in October. Critical minerals and rare earths are a huge part of ensuring both countries can operate the way we need to in that region and around the world. And finally, as we move – as was mentioned – full steam ahead on AUKUS, we applaud Australia's upcoming delivery of an additional 1 billion to help expand U.S. submarine production capacity. We're strengthening AUKUS so that it works for America, for Australia, and for the UK.

There's a lot we're going to do together in the months ahead. This meeting will be – as was laid out by President Trump, as I mentioned at Reagan just a couple days ago, these are practical, realistic ways that our two countries can come together to ensure that we provide peace through

strength for both of our nations. The stronger we are together the more we can deter the kinds of conflicts neither of us want to see, and this is a deepening of that partnership. Grateful to be here. Thank you.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER MARLES: Well, Secretary Rubio, Secretary Hegseth – Marco, Pete – on behalf of Penny and I, thank you very much for having us here in Washington today. It is a real pleasure to be here in the 40th anniversary of AUSMIN.

Our relationship with the United States is the most important relationship that we have. And indeed, our alliance with the United States is really the cornerstone of Australian strategic and foreign policy. And today is an important moment to take that forward again over the next 12 months. We are living in a much more contested world, where it really matters to be doubling down with friends and allies. And obviously, America is front and center and foremost for Australia in that respect.

We are very grateful for the meeting that happened between Prime Minister Albanese and President Trump a couple of months ago. It's very significant in the context of the relationship. I think also President Trump has given us the motto for our meeting today, which is "full steam ahead." And it is very much full steam ahead in terms of the alliance, in terms of the progress on AUKUS, in preparing ourselves for the establishment of the Submarine Rotational Force – West at the end of 2027. That is a significant moment, and – in the journey of AUKUS.

But right now, we've had an increased number of visits, of U.S. nuclear-powered submarines to Australia, including the USS *Vermont* which has been at HMAS Stirling over the last six weeks or so, where it's undergone the most extensive maintenance that a U.S. nuclear submarine has undertaken outside of the United States. And we are really pleased with the progress that we are seeing in terms of building Australia's capabilities to ultimately to be able to operate our own nuclear-powered submarine capability going forward.

At every AUSMIN meeting that we've had over the – since 2022, when Penny and I first started attending these AUSMIN meetings, a central part of what we have sought to do in the defense space is to increase the U.S. footprint in Australia. And this AUSMIN will be no different, as Pete has just taken you through. Be it infrastructure, which enables greater bomber rotations in Australia, or be it what we are doing in terms of enhancing logistics capability of the United States in Australia, having more American equipment be stored in Australia, for example, the Ospreys. These are just examples of what we are doing across every domain – air, sea, and ground, but also space and cyber – to have the most extensive American force posture that we have seen in terms of the breadth of that in the Australian continent. And that is so important going forward to make very clear in our region that Australia and America stand side by side, working together to contribute to the peace and security of the Indo-Pacific.

As we meet today, there are almost 900 Australian servicemen and women who are embedded in the United States Defense Forces across the U.S. Indeed, the deputy commanders of the U.S. Army, the U.S. Navy, and the U.S. Air Force in the Pacific are all now institutionally Australian, and that is an example of the degree to which our two countries work so closely together in respect of defense.

Penny and I are really looking forward to taking our relationship and our alliance again forward in the meetings that we have today. We are working really well with this administration, and we are very excited about working with you, Marco and Pete, to take the alliance forward into the future.

FOREIGN MINISTER WONG: Thank you.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Thank you very much.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER MARLES: Thank you.

SECRETARY RUBIO: Thank you.

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